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ABSTRACT

This paper utilizes a grounded narrative to report characteristics of teaching that are most culturally Fijian. Grounded narrative is a data reduction methodology of qualitative reporting evidenced by the data. It is used to portray vividly and authentically the Fijian educational setting by highlighting the salient cultural characteristics that typify Fijian teaching. The paper depicts a fictitious culturally-extreme Fijian rural school, an ideal type. This description effectively highlights the sociocultural determinants of Fijian school ethos by reporting extreme aspects of English teaching and daily school management. The first part of the narrative described the school's main physical and management features. The second part focused on the teaching and learning of English in the Fijian rural context. The teachers' methodological strategies for teaching English are outlined. It is concluded that systematic teaching of students to the Fijian national English examination is inimical to broader pedagogical objectives, because it ignores the fact that English is not the language of daily life. This finding has relevance for the training of teachers and managers for rural Fijian secondary schools. It underscores that teacher training, without reference to the determining socio-cultural characteristics of Fiji is unlikely to significantly broaden the pedagogy of rural English teachers and hence the English language proficiency of their students. Contains 40 references. (KFT)

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STORYING CULTURAL SPECIFICITIES OF ESL TEACHING IN FIJI: A GROUNDED COMPOSITE NARRATIVE

Béatrice Boufoy-Bastick

Abstract

This paper utilises a grounded narrative to report characteristics of teaching that are most culturally Fijian. Grounded narrative is a data reduction methodology of qualitative reporting evidenced by the data. It is used here to convey vividly and authentically the Fijian educational setting by highlighting the salient cultural characteristics which typify Fijian teaching. It depicts a fictitious culturally-extreme Fijian rural school, an ideal type. This description effectively highlights the sociocultural determinants of Fijian school ethos by reporting extreme aspects of English teaching and daily school management.

Introduction

This paper utilises a grounded narrative to describe major sociocultural characteristics (i) determining the ethos and administration of Fijian rural secondary schools and (ii) influencing teaching of their common 'English as a Second Language' curriculum. The ethnographic field work informing this article was conducted in eight Fijian rural secondary schools over three years. Polar analyses of salient observations were coalesced and reported as characteristics of one fictional characteristically-Fijian rural secondary school. These polar characteristics are grounded by references to the ethnographic data. The 'obtrusiveness' of the reference format depends on the readership of the narrative, and varies from the textual authority of imbedded citation (as in this paper) to an unobtrusive numerical subscript citing. This original phenomenological qualitative reporting technique, which I call 'grounded composite narrative', is derived from Weber's 'ideal type' and from Grounded Theory methodology. I have developed three types of grounded composite narratives, (i) polar composites, (ii) bi-polar composites and (iii) modal composites. This paper describes the polar composite narrative.

The most extreme Fijian teaching characteristics are distributed throughout the rural Fijian schools. The polar analysis selects these extreme characteristics from ethnographic observations of these schools. The grounded composite narrative reports these extreme

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characteristics as a composite description of one fictitious school. The description is grounded by referencing the characteristics to the contexts in which they were observed. The narrative description uses literary style to authentically convey the ethos encapsulated by the composite. This paper presents (1) the composite grounded narrative as a qualitative reporting methodology, then uses the polar grounded narrative to describe (2) a fictitious Fijian rural secondary school: Koronivuli Lomolomo and (3) its interpretation of the 'English as a Second Language' (ESL) curriculum.

1 The composite grounded narrative as a communicative qualitative reporting methodology

The composite grounded narrative is a qualitative reporting methodology for vividly describing the research context. I have developed three types of composite grounded narratives; the polar composite of extreme characteristics which acts like a stereotype, the bi-polar composite for contrasting two contexts by describing two fictitious contexts each embodying their opposing characteristics, and a model composite that typifies the research context by a description embodying its modal characteristics. This method of qualitative data reduction has been developed to condense extensive rich ethnographic data while rigorously retaining their situated meaning and validating that situated meaning by grounding it through references to the relevant data.

The vivid description in the polar composite described here is rendered by reporting those most culturally-extreme characteristics of Fijian rural secondary schools and coalescing them into a description of one fictional school. It allows the reporting of extreme Fijian characteristics which are found across Fijian rural schools and which might have been unnoticed in any one Fijian school. The validity of this narrative is in the grounding of the description of this fictional Fijian school by verifiable references to the contexts in which the data was observed. Verifiable references to the data are given as grounding evidence; evidence such as verbatim quotations referenced by their text unit numbers from NUD*IST transcription documents.

One advantage of grounded composites is that they protect confidentiality. The following grounded narrative has allowed me to protect the schools' confidentiality while reporting on major socio-cultural characteristics that determine the ethos and day-to-day operation of eight rural Fijian secondary schools on the three Fiji islands of Vanua Levu, Ovalau and Taveuni. The fictional rural Fijian school which stereotypes the Fijian-ness of these eight rural schools is called 'Koronivuli Lomolomo'. It has a predominantly indigenous Fijian population and it is located in the South of Vanua Levu.

The qualitative data which have been gathered for the polar analysis that informs the school's characterization include recordings of semi-structured interviews in urban and rural schools over a three-year period with English teachers, Form 3 and 4 students, Heads of Department, Principals and Vice-Principals, local education officers and Ministry of Education staff, observations of Form III and IV English classes. The data also included administrative and course documents (Altheide, 1996, p. 3). The administrative documents included school financial returns, evaluative reports on external examinations, staffing details, disciplinary procedures, codes of ethics, and school rules. The course documents specific to the teaching of the Forms III and IV English Fiji Junior Certificate course included schemes of work, past internal examination papers, and teachers' notes. The ethnographic field notes for this Grounded Theory study (Glaser, 1994; Glaser & Strauss, 1967, 1971; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) used 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973, p. 6) recording emic interpretations coded by their symbolic significance. The polar analysis identified Fijian characteristics as those common to Fijian rural and urban schools and then selected from these Fijian characteristics those in rural schools that were most different in degree and frequency from those in urban schools. This polar analysis of these data on Fijian rural and urban schools has given rise to 'Koronivuli Lomolomo' - a grounded composite narrative of a Fijian rural secondary school.

In part 2 of this paper, this grounded narrative describes the major physical and management features of this Fijian rural secondary school. Then in part 3 it describes how the FJC 'English as a Second Language' (ESL) syllabus is operationalised in an 'English as a Foreign Language' (EFL) context (Boufof-Bastick, 1997, p. 60; Stern, 1983, pp. 16-17). As an extension of Weber's 'ideal type', what is described in part 2 of the composite are what was most different from the data on urban Fijian secondary schools. Similarly, what is reported in part 3 of the composite is the polarities of ethos and daily administration of the schools that are most different from those of Fijian urban secondary schools. These differences are in large part due to the traditional socio-cultural values of the Fijian rural communities that are socially integrated with the rural schools, while being very different from the socio-cultural values of schools catering for Fijians living in the urban centres.

2 A Fijian rural secondary school: Koronivuli Lomolomo

(i) Location of the school and school buildings

Koronivuli Lomolomo (KL) is a rural Fijian secondary school situated in the South of Vanua Levu island. KL is pleasantly located at the top of a steep dirt road a few kilometers away from a small urban centre. The school overlooks the sea and nestles in a bushy forest. It is a school serving the local village communities. However, 280 of the 550 students board at the school because of the transport difficulties to and from some of the local villages.

Three long single storey buildings make up the school. The first building comprises two small administrative offices and a tiny staffroom. Each of these administrative offices are stacked with piles of files and yellowing aged school records. The classrooms are located in the other two long buildings. The first building is an older building where the junior classes are accommodated. The classrooms have this battered look indicative of the passing of time. Old-fashioned desks designed for two students to sit together clutter the classrooms. Some of the desks bear the names of generations of students' names carved into their wood. In contrast, the students' desks in the senior classrooms are newer and designed for students to sit individually. All classrooms are adorned with faded pictures posted on the walls beside administrative notices such as the school rules or the class weekly timetable.

KL also has a small library. It is one of the smallest rooms in the senior school designated as 'the school library'. This minuscule library consists of a six shelves stacked with unwinsome reference books and sets of identical text books. The library is used principally for students to consult reference books and read newspapers and as a storage room for the school text books (Singh, 1995). The popular fiction 'library' books are guarded elsewhere by the English teachers who give out the books to students in class time. The English teachers monitor the issuing of these highly popular books - books like *The Hardy Boys* or *Nancy Drew*. Records of the fiction books issued by English teachers are intended to reduce the loss or 'stealing' of popular library books. Teachers, tolerant of their losses, will explain that students attach high value to these books because of the dearth of such books in the students' own homes.

Although the paucity of library books is of concern to the school management, the purchase of appealing readers remains low on the list of priorities at KL. However, the school management and English teachers welcome book donations from outside donors. The lack of educational provisions noted at KL is a problem reported in most Fijian rural secondary schools (Stewart, 1983, 1984).

(ii) KL school management practices and objectives

KL has been established by the Catholic church. The priest is the chief school manager and he oversees the accounts. This causes problems for the newly-appointed KL principal who is somewhat displeased with the overall school management. He complains that the priest's religious obligations are given precedence over school matters. He mentions, in particular, that the priest often leaves the community for a few weeks at a time and during his absence no necessary unanticipated purchases can be made - this is because the priest keeps the school cheque book. The principal also alludes to the school management's ineptitude in

making any long-term development plans and to the lack of positive support for his own proposals. This issue had been raised contentiously by the Minister of Education Mrs. Vakatale (Vakatale, 1997) who declared that "Most Fijian committees have to be trained in the basics of bookkeeping and accountability. They don't really set up their budget for the year, they don't have plans for the school and it always seem (sic) to be on an ad hoc basis". The Vice-Principal (VP) who is New Zealander and has now been teaching at the school for over a decade and is more indulgent of administrative discord. He refers to the school's achievements with pride. He mentions, for example, the success of the multi-craft course, which was regrettably recently abandoned due to the lack of adequate funding. The VP avows that multi-craft students have learnt valuable practical building skills which are highly-valued in their village communities (Baba, 1986; Sharma, 1989). He will tell you proudly that his past students are to be commended for erecting a new classroom and he deplores the budgetary constraints of the school. Additional financial resources are provided by the local communities through fundraising. Being a Christian school, a strong emphasis is placed on acknowledging traditional Christian celebrations. These days of celebration often become fundraising events when parents and members of the 'mataqali' come from the villages and bring food, drinks and handicrafts to be sold on the school compound. Although these congenial fundraising events augment the yearly school budget, they are insufficient for major curriculum developments or for the purchase of costly resource materials. The school keeps untidy records of financial outlays which are then entered on the annual financial return forms sent by the MOE. The financial return forms are filled in pencil which makes the forms hardly legible. Further the Principal mentions that the Ministry of Education (MOE) requires school financial returns to be completed by a given date. He points out that this date does not take into account the lateness with which the forms arrived at the school nor the time required to fill them in. This typical delay and the lack of care shown in filling in the financial management forms has proved costly to the school in the past because requests for building grants have so far not been awarded to KL.

3 Operationalising the FJC English curriculum

Learning English at KL is not so much learning a second language (SL) as a foreign language (FL). A foreign language is a language which is learnt as a school subject and it is not the language spoken by the local Fijian communities (Stern, 1983, pp. 16-17).

Designation as a second language assumes community usage the pedagogic significance being that FL is more instruction whereas SL is immersion.

This section describes the low level of English usage within the local Fijian communities and then examines how teachers at KL translate the MOE English as a Second Language syllabus into classroom practices at Forms 3 and 4. This section outlines (a) how language use is compartmentalized and (b) the features of teaching English as a Foreign Language at

Koronivuli Lomolomo.

(i) Compartmentalized language use

The use of English in education, a colonial legacy (Lotherington-Woloszyn, 1991a, 1991b, 1991c; Moag & Moag, 1978; NUD*IST ref 1), is limited to the school. Many rural Fijian communities do not yet receive television broadcasts and English newspapers are rarely seen, apart from the dated copies in the schools. Hence, Fijian remains the language of the local communities (Geraghty, 1984, p. 49; Mugler, 1996, p. 275). This language compartmentalisation is further strengthened by the school's language policy embedded in the school rules. These school rules are faded documents posted on classroom walls reminding students that English is to be used at all times between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. The purpose of the 'English only' rule is to encourage students to use English to express themselves. This is intended to extend the use of English outside the classroom and favor spontaneous interaction between students. The English teachers assert that interacting verbally in English helps students to develop their linguistic skills in this language. Although teachers acknowledge the benefit of this informal use of English, little attention is paid to applying the 'English only' rule (Tamata, 1996, p. 96). Teachers address one another in Fijian, greet one another 'vakaviti' with a cheerful 'bula' whilst staff meetings and school records use both English and Fijian (NUD*IST ref 2). The continuous language switching (Tamata, 1996, p. 98) is also manifest among students whose tentative attempts to express themselves in English are noticeable when they can be overheard by teachers. The principal concedes that enforcing the use of English in school has failed but the rule remains (NUD*IST ref 3, ref 4). Liddicoat (1990, p. 46) reported similar findings on the 'English only' language policy in rural Samoan schools. He made a similar remark that "the policy of English only... was not always upheld".

(ii) Teaching EFL in Forms 3 and 4 at KL

The MOE-prescribed FJC curriculum is common to all secondary schools. Schools in rural areas where English is a foreign language, such as KL, follow the same English curriculum as in urban schools where English is a second language used by the urban community, and sometimes a first language. Students from all secondary schools in Fiji sit for a common Fiji Junior English examination paper at Form 4. So inevitably rural students' FJC examination results in English are lower than those of urban students.

Teachers at KL admit that teaching the FJC English syllabus to rural students requires a different teaching methodology from teaching English to urban students - one of the major reasons being the limited English usage outside the school. Teachers' major methodological strategies to cover the FJC English as a Second Language syllabus are: (a) discriminative choice of passages from the prescribed English 'Link' textbooks and (b) compilation of

model answers.

(iii) Discriminative choice of Link passages

The Link 3 and 4 textbooks are the MOE-prescribed English textbooks for Forms 3 and 4. They are considered as the English curriculum at Forms 3 and 4 by KL English teachers (Crossley & Myra, 1994). Few teachers, other than the Head of the English Department, consult the Form 1 - 4 English prescription. This prescription is set by the Curriculum Development Unit of the MOE. It was originally developed with the help of overseas advisors who, like the local urban curriculum designers, did not utilize the SL/FL distinction. The prescription describes the broad educational and linguistic objectives of the junior secondary English course. Instead, teachers rely primarily on the Link textbooks to prepare their Forms 3 and 4 students for the language section of the Fiji Junior Certificate paper. Their reliance on the Link textbooks for adequate examination preparation for the language section of the FJC paper necessitates a discriminate choice of passages within the Link textbooks. For example, Form 3 teachers report that they cover only the first eight of the ten units in Link 3. Similarly, Form 4 teachers say they leave out some of the Link 4 reading comprehension materials. For instance, Form 4 teachers concede that some language exercises are shortened and long reading comprehension passages are curtailed. Teachers report that the discriminative coverage of Link language activities is necessary because of the unrealistic amount of language materials presented within each Link unit. Thus KL teachers prefer to focus on selective aspects of the course which they consider important for the examination. The three major criticisms which teachers make of the Link books concern the length of the reading comprehension passages, the uninteresting themes and the repetitious nature of each of the Link units. Benson's evaluation of the Link course in 1989 also reported these features (p. 13). Clive Benson also wrote the 'Target' books which are more concise than the Link books. KL English teachers now show a preference for these Target books which they claim address better their students' needs. The conciseness of the language exercises make the Target books popular among both students and teachers. In sum, the amount of language curriculum materials to be covered in the English FJC course is somewhat problematic to English teachers. So KL English teachers adopt a focused methodological approach to teaching English which they claim is an appropriate way of teaching the FJC ESL syllabus to their EFL students (Stern, 1983, p. 16).

(iv) Compiling model answers

KL English teachers prepare their students by selectively working through the Link books (Curriculum Development Unit, 1980) and also by efficiently preparing their students to give suitable answers to the literature questions of the FJC English paper. KL English teachers explain the importance of preparing their students for the literature section of the FJC

English paper as this section carries 30% of the English paper - the remaining 70% being allotted to the language section.

The preparation for the literature section of the English FJC paper consists in selecting three of the four literary genres examined in the Fiji Junior. The study of literature is done systematically: the teacher reads the passage under study stopping on difficult words so as to explain them or to translate them into Fijian, asks general questions orally, writes down specific factual questions on the board which the students copy down on their literature books to then answer, and finally students write their own summaries of the passage. These summaries, however, are often dictated by the teacher for expediency. This expedient practice ensures that all students have 'understood' the main ideas of the passage and written them down in grammatically correct English. The assumed 'correctness' of the teacher's notes encourages the students to memorize these notes and reproduce them, often inappropriately, in the examinations (NUD*IST ref 5, ref 6). The English teachers claim that their students are suitably prepared to answer adequately the FJC literature questions. They admit that they can predict fairly accurately the questions to be set in the examination (NUD*IST ref 7, ref 8, ref 9). Their accurate predictions result from the similarity of the literature questions set over the last two decades. The unchanging type of questions enable KL teachers to go through past examination papers (NUD*IST ref 10) and provide model answers which the students can memorize (NUD*IST ref 11). So the study of literature becomes a memorization exercise. Teachers are aware of the pedagogical unsoundness of training students to produce acceptable answers. Nonetheless they find no better alternative for helping their students to pass the Fiji Junior English paper. The lack of their students' proficiency in English and their students' inability to express themselves necessitate these pragmatic teaching strategies which enable EFL learners to contend with an ESL syllabus.

Summary

This paper has two aims (i) to introduce the methodology of grounded composite narratives, and (ii) to use the method to report on ESL teaching in Fijian rural schools. The reporting methodology has been derived from Grounded Theory research methodology and Weber's 'ideal type'. I have devised three types of grounded composites. The type described in this paper is a polar composite. This qualitative data reduction method coalesces the stereotypical characteristics distributed among the observed contexts and reports them as characteristics of one fictional context. The narrative is grounded by referencing the characteristics to the original contexts.

This grounded narrative has described the socio-cultural determinants of the ethos and daily management in eight Fijian rural secondary schools by depicting a fictional rural Fijian secondary school, 'Koronivuli Lomolomo', and its English teaching. The first part of the

narrative described the school's main physical and management features. The second part of the narrative focused on the teaching/learning of English in the Fijian rural context. It has in particular highlighted the problems which emanate from this socio-cultural context: problems of daily management and the problems encountered by English teachers when implementing the Fiji Junior ESL syllabus in an EFL context. The paper has outlined the teachers' methodological strategies for teaching English. These included focusing on selective aspects of the FJC language course and providing model answers to the FJC literature questions. It is realized that the systematic training of students to the FJC examination is inimical to the broader pedagogical objectives of the CDU English prescription. This ESL prescription, which had been drawn up with the pedagogical assistance of metropolitan curriculum advisers, ignores the fact that English is not the language of the community (Benton, 1981, p. 3) and that "school learning does not provide a continuation of community learning" (Lotherington, 1996, p. 353).

However, this teaching methodology is claimed to be an effective way for EFL students to be successful in the ESL FJC examination. This finding has relevance for the training of teachers and managers for Fijian rural secondary schools. It underscores that teacher training, without reference to the determining socio-cultural characteristics of Fijian rural secondary schools, is unlikely to significantly broaden the pedagogy of rural English teachers and hence the English language proficiency of their students.

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Vakatale in hot seat again (1997, January 27). *The Fiji Times*, pp. 7-8.

NUD*IST Reference documents and text units

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Ref 1*

The following excerpt from an interview with a rural Fijian Senior Education Officer taped on April 19th in Savusavu on Vanua Levu island reports on the English language policy enforced in school.

+++++

+++ ON-LINE DOCUMENT: T3B

+++ Retrieval for this document: 9 units out of 552, = 1.6%

++ Text units 113-121:

* language usage; vernacular; Fijian; community; language policy; rural; EFL; ESL; USP; language status; colonial policy; 113

Q. Q11: And in these remote schools, they don't ... do they speak English? 114

Ans. Oh yeah. 115

Q. Yes.

116

Ans. All of them. If you go to furthest island, you'll find people that even at Class 1 they talk in Fiji-an English. Because in colonial days, English has to be compulsory for all schools. And even our Fijian languages it's pushed aside. And that was:, I think that was: a mistake, and: we had tend to say that English is supreme. It's 'higher' then all other languages and we also look at coloured people as these other people who.. er..very 'high' mighty. The whites are more mightier then the blacks. So these kinds of interpretation that was a colonial thing. So now we are trying to 'get' these things back and I think the teaching of Fijian has gone back, euh... as far as this year is the first year to be introduced at USP in language studies. 117

Q. Oh, Yes.

118

Ans. It's introduced this year.

119

Q. Yes

120

Ans. So, if you like, you can go in there, for: a 'session' with them [laughs] 121

+++++

Ref 2*

This excerpt from an interview with Fijian principal taped on July 7th, 1995 indicates that the ELP is not strictly enforced in Fijian schools. Not only Fijian is used in personal interaction, it is also used in school administration.

This interview also shows the good-natured informality of the Fijians.

+++++

+++ ON-LINE DOCUMENT: TD-60

+++ Retrieval for this document: 4 units out of 159, = 2.5%

++ Text units 151-154:

Ans. I am afraid the exam results are written in Fijian. But the figures

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12

are alright. 152

Q. Can I pay for the photocopies?

153

Ans. No. It's a pleasure to give out those results. Maybe because they are good results, if they were bad I would have hidden them.

154

Ref 3*

This interview held on November 17th, 1995 with a Fijian teacher of English at a rural government secondary school on Taveuni island shows the non-enforcement of the ELP in Fijian rural secondary schools: English is the language of instruction and it is to be used from '6 to 6' (as this is a boarding government school) in the school compound, but in practice Fijian remains the language of interaction.

+++ ON-LINE DOCUMENT: TD-B13C

+++ Retrieval for this document: 3 units out of 270, = 1.1%

++ Text units 112-114:

Q. Do you have a school rule that students must speak English the whole time? 113

Ans. Yes. Euh... I have been teaching here for the last 2 years but I heard that they did try to have it. But, yes, there is a need for... Yes, Fijian students to speak English. 114

Ref 4*

The excerpt from an interview with an Indian Form III teacher of English at a Fijian Methodist High school on Taveuni island shows the extent of the ELP applicability in school. This teacher reports on the difficulty to enforce the ELP - ELP tried to be implemented during term I of 1995 but it had to be abandoned the following term.

+++ ON-LINE DOCUMENT: TD-B18A

+++ Retrieval for this document: 4 units out of 83, = 4.8%

++ Text units 71-74:

Ans. If they [students] speak in Fijian they have to collect 10 coconuts for us [teachers]. So that time they've practised speaking in English '8 to 3, 3.30'. But everybody trying to *speak in English that time*. Even teachers they had to. But sometimes, teachers, Fijian teachers, for the subject they *have to speak in Fijian*. 72

Q. Why? 73

Ans. Because Fijian is one of the subjects taught and sometimes some of the students when they don't understand *they speak in Fijian*. I don't speak Fijian so... 74

Ref 5*

The following excerpt from an interview with 2 good female (Fijian and Indo-Fijian) students of English recorded in April 1995 in a Fijian Catholic school in Labasa on Vanua Levu island indicates the predictability of the FJC examination taken at the end of Form IV.

+++ ON-LINE DOCUMENT: TB19A

+++ Retrieval for this document: 15 units out of 350, = 4.3%

++ Text units 31-39:

Q. Was there anything in the [mock] examination you didn't expect? 32
 Ans. S1: We expect everything to come, what we learnt and what we revised
 like euh... we expected that to come, and it came, but like, sometimes new
 things come, so we just try to tackle it. 33
 Q. Would it be something you haven't revised? 34
 Ans. S2: We revise everything. 35
 Q. You revise everything! 36
 Ans. S1: Yes. 37
 Q. So you could answer all the questions? 38
 Ans. S1: Yes, we answered all the questions. 39

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 Ref 6*

The following excerpt from an interview with 2 good female (Fijian and Indo-Fijian) students of English recorded in April 1995 in a Fijian Catholic school in Labasa on Vanua Levu island shows the routine literature teaching geared to prepare students to answer the expected FJC literature questions and the resulting students' literature study style.

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+++ ON-LINE DOCUMENT: TB19A

++ Text units 140-145:

Q. Do you do a lot of 'cramming' then? 141
 Ans. S2: Like for me, to read this much, and like for me to keep it in my
 head, and to say it without looking. We don't cram. We find that when we
 cram when we sit the exam we forget. 142
 Ans. S3: Sometimes just the hard parts. 143
 Q. What are the hard parts in English? 144
 Ans. S3: The book, the main parts, the... what we like about it, that's
 all. [usual FJC literature questions] 145

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 Ref 7*

This excerpt from an interview with a Form V Fijian male student held at a government school on Taveuni island on November 1995 illustrates the predictability of the FJC English paper.

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+++ ON-LINE DOCUMENT: TD-B13A

+++ Retrieval for this document: 5 units out of 107, = 4.7%

++ Text units 5-9:

Q. At the FJC, were there questions you were not prepared for, in English?
 Ans. No, I was prepared. 7
 Q. There was no surprise? 8
 Ans. No surprise. It was quite fair. 9

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Ref 8*

The following excerpt from an interview with a Part-European (mixed Fijian-European blood) female teacher of English taped on November 21st, 1995 shows the predictability of the English FJC composition themes, the lack of students' written English proficiency and independent thinking and the resulting teaching methodology used for examination preparation (teaching students what to say and how to say it - i.e. how to answer FJC expected composition questions).

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+++ ON-LINE DOCUMENT: TD-B19A

+++ Retrieval for this document: 13 units out of 134, = 9.7%

++ Text units 57-63:

Q. And how do you know that they will be tested? 58

Ans. Comprehension questions, for example, at least they have the same aim. Just read them, circle answer, hey? So I can just do 1 or 2 instead of doing 5 you know. 59

Q. And for the composition, how do you teach composition? How do you select the themes? 60

Ans. Um... just a couple of weeks ago I was teaching composition to these Form III. They've come up from PS like, came up knowing not, how to write. I mean, you know, how to write a grammatical sentence, you don't know how to put your ideas into order. To write like, for example, the expository composition... So I tried to find a solution and teach them. Also I managed to get some notes to teach them about the themes. 61

Q. Where from? 62

Ans. It's a book called English through Basics. A very simple book. When I came in to teach, I noticed they were using it at the 5th Form level. But when I opened it up, and I looked at it, I thought it should be part of a 3rd Form level, not a 5th Form level. Because it's English basics too. So I have been using that book, teaching about the theme. 63

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Ref 9*

The interview held on November 21st, 1995 with Form III Part-European teacher of English shows the predictability of the FJC English examination

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+++ ON-LINE DOCUMENT: TD-B19A

++ Text units 121-126:

Ans. The paper was all right. Everything that I thought was tested. 122

Q. There was no surprise? 123

Ans. No, there shouldn't be. [laugh] 124

Q. Why do you say 'there shouldn't be'? 125

Ans. Because all the schools are aware of the syllabus, like, what will be tested. And the Education Department too. If it's a surprise then it will be something which is out of the syllabus. Everything is in the syllabus but probably a few questions would have been difficult for some children. 126

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Ref 10*

Fijian male teacher of English from a government school on Vanua Levu explains how he prepares his students for the FJC examination on November 17th, 1995.

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+++ ON-LINE DOCUMENT: TD-B13C

++ Text units 81-85:

Q. How do you prepare the students for the examination? You said it was your responsibility? 8

Ans. Yes. 83

Q. What do you do? 84

Ans. For me. I am taking them for English and I am also their class teacher. So what I did *I went through the past year papers*. We just looked at the format of the paper. And from there what the paper would be. What the paper would be like.

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Ref 11*

The excerpt from a transcribed interview with the Professor of Education and Culture at the University of the South Pacific taped on November 16th, 1995 shows the similarity between traditional learning methods and those in school.

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+++ ON-LINE DOCUMENT: TB52

+++ Retrieval for this document: 3 units out of 61, = 4.9%

++ Text units 29-31:

Q. Why do you think they emphasise this method of repeating? Do they feel that as teachers they should really hammer things into the children's heads or is it because they feel accountable to the Ministry and hence if they don't get good examination results... 30

Ans. Um... Yes, well, I think it is both. Because they know that in the *traditional contexts*, chanting and memorising words, in the sense that you can teach information, you can pass on information in that way. And they know also that it works because the kids score highly in the exams. So I mean they are very clever, that they obviously could see that there is a link between the... memorising and the... what goes on in the classroom. And performance in the examination. And that is because probably because of the way the examinations are constructed. It allows for that kind of memorising. If the exams were such, it did not allow kids to regurgitate memorised facts, then the teachers would know that this method is not going to work and they would change. 31

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Glossary

bula: hello

koronivuli: Fijian lexical sign for school. This sign is made up of three words: koro which means village, ni which means of, and vuli which means learn.

mataqali: clan

vakaviti: Fijian way